It's good to be an OSA member at Stanford University
Lana Lau, Membership Chair, Stanford OSA / SPIE Student Chapter

Recruitment for the OSA / SPIE Student Chapter at Stanford University is tough work. This year’s chapter recruitment events include a barbeque in the warm California sun, a night trip to a newly-renovated science museum, and a weekend photonics retreat in the wine capital Napa Valley—what can we say, it’s a hard life.

We see the OSA / SPIE student chapter as a valuable resource among optics researchers. At Stanford, we are fortunate to have a large number of scientists from different fields involved in optics-related research. Since these scientists span departments ranging from physics to electrical engineering to biology, it can be challenging for us to form a community. The goal of our recruitment efforts is to use the Stanford OSA / SPIE as a platform to unite this diverse group of researchers under our common passion of optics. In doing so, we hope to foster an environment for interdisciplinary interaction and collaboration across the Stanford campus.

To expand the chapter's membership for the 2009-2010 academic year, we hosted a kick-off barbeque to advertise the chapter's activities to a large group of students, staff, and faculty. This year, we especially targeted fields which traditionally had low representation. As a result, over 100 researchers from across the Stanford campus attended our fall mixer and 30 new members joined our chapter's email list. In addition, our chapter recruited volunteers for the OSA Educators’ Day outreach event, the Frontiers in Optics 2009 Conference and new members for our chapter committees. Of course, we had burgers and fun in the sun, too!

Upcoming recruitment events in the spring include the “Nightlife“ in which the newly renovated California Academy of Science in San Francisco comes alive with live music, cocktails, and science fun—and we are excited to be part of it! This event will also include our friends from the neighboring San Francisco State and UC Berkeley chapters.

In April, we will host the 2nd annual Stanford University Photonics Retreat (SUPR) in Napa Valley. The retreat is the highlight of our year, and it requires significant fundraising, negotiation and planning efforts. This year’s program features 12 invited speakers, student poster presentations, a career development panel, and workshops as well as social activities. With programming that combines academic, professional development, and social events, the retreat aims to network and strengthen relationships, making our optics community at Stanford more cohesive.

Throughout the year we try to convey how great it is to be an OSA member. We have special events for members only, such as small group lunches/dinners with notable invited speakers and discounts for programming such as “Nightlife“ and SUPR. Of course, one of the greatest benefits for members is the opportunity to be a leader and gain the unique experiences of organizing these functions. We look forward to reporting on how these upcoming chapter events turn out!